

Interview with Charles McC. Mathias

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

SENATOR CHARLES MCC. MATHIAS

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is October 18, 1995. This is an interview with Senator Charles ("Mac") Mathias. This is being done on the behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. We're doing it in Senator Mathias's office in downtown Washington.

Senator, I'm wondering if we could start off a bit by giving a bit about your background: could you tell me when and where you were born and your family?

MATHIAS: Yes, I was born in Frederick, Maryland on the 24th of July, 1922. My father was a lawyer in Frederick and my mother was a native of Frederick. Her name was Theresa Trail. Both of their families had been Republicans even back during the Civil War.

Q: Which was a little difficult in those days...

MATHIAS: It was. Frederick was a rather unique community in those days—it was much more isolated than it is today. It's now really part of suburban Washington, but in those days it was a very rural county seat which was centered on the courthouse and local events. So it was a great place to grow up.

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Q: My great grandfather marched passed there in late June of 1863. He was with the Army of the Potomac. Where did you go to school?

MATHIAS: Of course, I went to the public schools in Frederick in the early days: I graduated from Frederick High School, then went for a year to the Pawling School in Pawling, New York. Then to Haverford College. The War (World War II) broke out, of course, on December 7th, 1941—that resulted in some abbreviation of my college. I enlisted...

Q: You enlisted in what?

MATHIAS: I initially enlisted in the Coast Guard. I had tried to join the Navy and they found a heart murmur which disqualified me. But the Coast Guard took me and then I got into some training programs in the Coast Guard which makes a long story, but I ended up in a training program at Yale University which the Coast Guard decided to terminate. At that point I was transferred into the Navy where I had originally tried to go. So I ended up in the Navy in World War II and went to the South Pacific.

Q: What type of duty did you have in the Pacific?

MATHIAS: I was on an amphibious command ship, which was a AGC, in fact, the US Appalachian, AGC I. We were involved in operations in the Philippines and went into the landing at Lingayen Gulf. Then we went on up to the occupation of Japan.

Q: Did you get involved in Okinawa?

MATHIAS: No, we were not immediately involved in Okinawa.

Q: During this time (our interview is going to be focused on your interest and concern with foreign affairs) did you get a chance to get ashore and see the Philippines and get any feel for this...

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MATHIAS: I saw a great deal of the Philippines, went into Manila when the ashes were still glowing - still smoking from the battle...

Q: Yes, that was one of the heaviest battles of our entire Pacific campaign.

MATHIAS: To retake Manila and a chance to see what life was like in various parts of the Philippines. And then we got up to Japan we were the first Americans to arrive at the north end of Honshu, so we had the initial experience of landing and making contact with the local Japanese people.

Q: _____ - Misawa and that area there?

MATHIAS: Aomori - we had no idea what sort of a reception we would get and we went ashore prepared to have some sort of difficulties if that happened. But there were no difficulties whatever: we were met on the beach by a group of the local elders who were bowing and welcoming. We discovered that they had been as uncertain about us as we had been about them because they had sent all the women and children to the hills. The women and children didn't reappear for several days. Then we went around to Nagasaki and Hiroshima which were awesome experiences because that was a matter of thirty days or so after the bombs had dropped. It still was pretty much exactly as it had been...

Q: Was there any concern at that time about exposing people to radiation?

MATHIAS: I don't think we knew enough to be very concerned.

Q: Nobody was running ahead with a Geiger counter?

MATHIAS: No, nothing like that.

Q: Just sort of go in and kick the ruins.

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MATHIAS: There was a lot to see. One thing that I regret that I didn't bring back—I remember stubbing my toe on something and looked down and there was a shiny object. As I looked at it, I realized what it was: it was molten glass. Apparently some Japanese housewife had some glass tumblers sitting on a shelf and the fire ball had been so hot that it melted this glass and fused all of these tumblers together into one lump of glass. It would have been such a striking, visible example of what happens under conditions of atomic bombing that I wish I had brought it back.

Q: Try to capture the mood at the time because now it is fifty years after that and historians are playing games of "Should we have dropped the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?". What were your feelings and, as far as you can gather, your fellow people? Were you an officer at the time or an enlisted man?

MATHIAS: I was an officer.

Q: Officer. What was the feeling when the bombs were dropped and after you saw this?

MATHIAS: Well, of course, we got the word that the bombs had been dropped when we were still in the Philippines. As I recall, we were anchored in a place called Tata Point off the Island of Leyte... I think that (well, I can only speak for myself), but there was some awareness that something pretty momentous had happened. This was not just another battle. This was something unprecedented and I think we were all aware of that. I had some (I suppose the best way to express it) some reservations. The release of such an awesome power had to give you pause as to whether or not this wasn't (to use a hackneyed phrase) letting the genie out of the bottle. In all of the excitement and with all of the optimism that released because we apparently were going to move forward and still there was this sense of reservation that perhaps this is a pretty drastic thing to have done.

Q: Had you been gearing up for the invasion of Japan, thinking about...?

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MATHIAS: We were prepared to go to the invasion, in fact, this was why we were at Taytay Point on Leyte. We were getting shots—inoculation that they thought would be required, we were taking on stores, all the things you do when you are getting ready for a major operation.

Q: Did you get into Japan at the time or were you pretty well stuck on ship?

MATHIAS: No, we had a rather interesting experience. When we came up from the Philippines to make our initial landing at Aomori in Honshu, the flag officer on our ship was Admiral Connelly (Richard Connelly).

Q: He had taken part in the Guadalcanal campaign.

MATHIAS: He was known as “Close-in Connelly”. He was Commander of Amphibious Group V at that time which was scheduled to take part in the landing. After we had landed in Aomori we then went up and occupied Hokkaido. I remember we had sort of a victory banquet at Hakodate—everyone appeared in blue uniforms which was rather unique in that station for the Pacific War. We all sat around on cushions in a Japanese restaurant—this was our first experience. But after we occupied northern Honshu and Hokkaido, Admiral Connelly left the Appalachian and he was succeeded by Admiral Oldendorf who was Combatron I.

Q: He had led the famous battle at “Cross the T” at Leyte Gulf.

MATHIAS: The last Admiral to “cross the T” at Leyte Gulf. That's right. He had duties around the Japanese coastline and as a result of having these two admirals, we visited a great many of the ports in Japan. That's how we got to Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Finally got to Tokyo—I remember we had anchored in Yokohama and got on a train or tried to get on a train into Tokyo. It was absolutely impossible—it was so packed and jammed, you

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couldn't get in it. My entry into Tokyo was on the cowcatcher of the locomotive. Sounds rather hazardous today, but at the time it seemed to be the only sensible thing to do.

Q: I'd like to catch again the mood at the time because I think these things are important for posterity and that is here we had been fighting the Japanese, they had attacked us at Pearl Harbor, there had been a lot of propaganda (a lot of it was sort of racist - "these dirty yellow bastards" and all that... a sneak attack and all.) Here the war was over, and you were coming face to face with them, what was your impression of how the Americans and Japanese got together?

MATHIAS: Actually, there was very little friction. The initial landing at Aomori was totally peaceful. I suspect that there may have been some pilfering from shops by some soldiers and sailors, but nothing major—no big problem. There were no serious incidents that I remember. It was a fairly peaceful occupation and that was my observation as we traveled around Japan. I remember going into the Diet in Tokyo and there were some sailors who were being amused by sitting themselves on the Emperor Hirohito's throne; but other than that there was no behavior that was disruptive or causing any breach of the peace—anything of that sort. There were a few incidents of that sort, but that was really all it amounted to. Tokyo was pretty quiet and orderly on the part of both the occupying forces and the local population.

Q: How long were you involved in Japan?

MATHIAS: We left Japan, it seems to me, around the end of the year and headed back to the United States.

Q: 1945?

MATHIAS: In 1945.

Q: And then what did you do?

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MATHIAS: We landed in California and I made my way back to the East Coast. I had enough points by that time that I was released from active duty in the spring of 1946.

Q: And back to Frederick?

MATHIAS: Back to Frederick.

Q: Then what?

MATHIAS: As a result of the fact that I had been sent by the Navy to Yale, I had accumulated enough academic credits that I was able to go immediately and enter the University of Maryland Law School. I didn't have to go back to any undergraduate work. So I went to the University of Maryland Law School in Baltimore, spent three years there, was graduated in 1949, and admitted to the Bar.

Q: Was your father still practicing as a lawyer at this time?

MATHIAS: Yes, I joined him in the practice of law. We had a joint office which we conducted for the next (really) ten years. I also did some other things: I was appointed as an Assistant Attorney General of Maryland; I was appointed later as City Attorney of Frederick; and finally in 1958, I was elected as a delegate to the state legislature—to the General Assembly of Maryland.

Q: During this time, both in the Maryland and in the Frederick aspects of the Attorney General's office were there any problems which could in any way be related to foreign affairs or was it pretty much Maryland?

MATHIAS: Well, we had one amusing , I say, incident (a little gruesome) that involved Canada. The Attorney General of Maryland (my boss) got a letter from the Attorney General of Canada stating that the hangman of Canada had become superannuated and was going to retire. They were finding themselves in Canada without a hangman,

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so they wanted to appoint a new hangman, but to appoint a hangman meant they had to find some way to train him. They sought the help of Maryland in training the new hangman of Canada. The two Attorneys General were to undertake this difficult mission, so it got assigned to me. So I communicated with the Canadians. As a result, a very distinguished Queen's Counsel, a very gentlemanly fellow, arrived in Baltimore with the newly appointed hangman who was a French Canadian. He had a World War II record in which he had barehandedly killed (I don't know) eighteen Germans or something of the sort and had shown utterly no emotion. That was his principle qualification for being the new hangman. So the reason they had appealed to Maryland for training assistance was because they had heard that we were about to hang a convicted prisoner, so they wanted to be on hand to witness this event. We had a warden at the State Penitentiary named Vernon Peppersack and he agreed to cooperate so he took the apprentice hangman as his assistant and I think they went through several dummy drills. They hanged a couple of sacks of sand and worked out the gallows. They were all prepared to go forward—I think the hanging was to take place at midnight or some such hour. At 11:45 p.m., the Governor of Maryland commuted the sentence, so there was no hanging. That was the one form of international cooperation that we undertook during my tenure at the State Law Department.

Q: Could you give me a little profile of Frederick? I assume you went as a delegate to Annapolis from Frederick county. We're talking about the late fifties—a little profile of Frederick in those days?

MATHIAS: Rural...a very rural community. It had been obviously changed by World War II. Before World War II, it was an essentially southern community: very rural, rigidly segregated, and many overtones of a pre-Civil War culture still in existence. World War II had, I think, begun changes in that because: number one, all of the younger males in the community had gone around the world with their horizons considerably broadened by all of their experiences; and secondly, because there were some federal installations that had come into Frederick that had brought a number of new people to Frederick, who

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had different backgrounds and points of view. Notably, Fort Detrick which was an Army biological warfare center which involved very highly educated, highly trained scientists from all over the country who were assembled at Fort Detrick and had become part of the Frederick community. So, the change had begun but it hadn't really had a maximum impact by the decade of the fifties. The principle economic support for the community was the milk check—the dairy farmers and dairy farming was really the controlling factor in the economy. Everything had to rotate around the needs of the dairy farmer. Even if you were setting up a political meeting, you had to consider the fact that the dairy farmers had to milk in the late afternoon and in the morning. You had to make sure that your schedule didn't interrupt the milking. But, I suppose it was a very traditional county seat: a small Bar - maybe thirty-five lawyers of varying degrees of engagement in the law and in the time they devoted to it. The judge was a major figure in the community and it was a very traditional community.

Q: While you're talking about Fort Dietrich being plunked in here and it's been now ten years since approximately 1948 when the military was desegregated and all...I lived from 1939 until 1950 in Annapolis as a kid and I can recall early on, you know, separate waiting rooms for whites and colored (as it was called) and all that...how was segregation played out in the mid to late fifties?

MATHIAS: It was still in full force in the early fifties. By the late fifties, there had begun to be some gradual easing, but it was by no means ebbing - it was still pretty strong.

Q: You were running, I assume, as a Republican?

MATHIAS: That's right.

Q: Republicans had, since the time of Roosevelt had, kind of, lost the black vote although the Republicans really were the first proponents of the blacks historically. Did the black vote play any part or was there a black vote?

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MATHIAS: Oh, it played a very strong part. There was still an element of the black community that supported the Republican Party. And the Republican Party, particularly in the rural areas like Frederick, made a great pitch for the black vote...counted on it...actively sought it...very different from what later occurred in the Republican Party. Actually as a young boy I had known old men and women who had been born as slaves— had talked to them and heard their description of what it was like to live as a slave in Maryland. Some of these people, having been freed by Lincoln, were absolutely loyal to Lincoln and to the Republican Party. My father used to make sure that some of them would get to the polls: they would be harassed and insulted by poll officials on occasion. He used to try to protect their right to vote and to shepherd them into the polls, but it wasn't always easy.

Q: When you went to the state legislature in 1958, what were sort of the issues you had to deal with?

MATHIAS: Well, civil rights was coming on. I had had one experience as City Attorney of Frederick—an early experience in civil rights—the City Hall in Frederick which had evolved out of the marketplace was also a theater. It had been a theater, and then converted into a movie house, but that was strictly segregated. The blacks sat in a gallery (known locally as the peanut gallery) and they couldn't sit down on the main floor of the theater. A woman named Juanita Mitchell, whose husband was Clarence Mitchell, came up from Baltimore and initiated legal action to desegregate the theater which was actually within the City Hall—it was part of the City Hall property. I should go back for just a moment to say that at the time, we had as governor a Republican named Theodore Roosevelt McKeldin, who was really quite a remarkable fellow.

Q: Yes. I remember him as a...word of him.

MATHIAS: He was very sincerely dedicated to the concept of civil rights and was quite a leader in this field. He had begun it when he first ran for governor - I think he was elected in 1950. Had run on a pro-civil rights platform in 1950, which was very, very early and he

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took a lot of abuse from the Democrats who were talking the old Dixie line. He was the pro-civil rights figure, so with this background when we had the demand to desegregate the City Hall theater(" City Opera House" as it was called.) I talked to the mayor about it and we together talked to the Board of Aldermen and finally worked out an agreement by which we would voluntarily desegregate and got a consent order from the court to do that. We compromised the case, so that those things did take place. That was the first time that I had met Juanita Mitchell with whom I later did a great deal of business because she and her husband, Clarence Mitchell, were among the foremost civil rights leaders. Among the black community in Baltimore and, of course, nationally, Clarence became one of the leaders of the NAACP.

Q: What did this do to you in the community - getting involved with something like this—the emotions can be stoked up so much on something like this?

MATHIAS: But it didn't.

Q: Really?

MATHIAS: It really didn't. At the time, not everybody was happy about it, but it didn't cause any serious repercussions...no.

Q: Well then, on to the legislature where you were - you were there from when to when?

MATHIAS: Well, the Election of 1958, when I was elected, was a disaster for the Republican Party. The Republican membership in the General Assembly of Maryland fell to its lowest level since the Civil War and I became somewhat conspicuous by the sheer circumstance that I was the only new Republican elected that year. So that was sort of a happenstance, but it made me more conspicuous than I would normally have been. If there had been a dozen new Republicans elected, I would have only been one of twelve and wouldn't have stood out at all, but this turned out as it did. Also, in the same election the member of Congress who represented the Sixth Congressional District was defeated

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for re-election (his name was Dewitt Hyde, which meant that there was a Democrat in the Sixth District. So there I was a new member of the state legislature receiving more than average attention because of the circumstances, with a Democrat in our Congressional District which was the only congressional district in Maryland that had any reasonable hope of going Republican. So, although I was only half way through my term in the state legislature, I decided to run for the Sixth Congressional District seat and narrowly was elected in the Congressional Election of 1960.

Q: This was the Eisenhower election? Oh, no...

MATHIAS: This was Kennedy.

Q: Oh, yes—absolutely.

MATHIAS: Eisenhower was president.

Q: But the Election of 1960 elected Kennedy. I would have thought Maryland being renowned as the Catholic state—with a Catholic President—the first one running and winning. I guess you were off to one side, I mean Frederick being not a particularly Catholic area or did this play any role?

MATHIAS: It didn't play a major role in our election. There was still a substantial number of registered Republicans in the far western counties of Maryland which were part of the Sixth District: Allegheny and Garrett counties. The Democrat who had been elected, who had a background in labor law, was an ardent supporter of the unions and demonstrated his support for the unions in many ways went a little too far for public opinion in that regard because Frederick county, for example still being essentially rural, wasn't prepared to take up the cudgels. Montgomery county which although it was comparatively liberal, was also not quite as liberal as the new congressman. So the setting was there and we moved into it with a lot of help and a lot of good fortune narrowly won the seat.

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Q: In that area, did foreign affairs of any ilk display itself as an issue or not?

MATHIAS: Not really in that election. That was primarily local issues, domestic politics, the economy. One of the reasons that the election was so bad for the Republicans was because there was a recession in the latter years of the Eisenhower administration. So there was a lot of talk about what could be done in Appalachia to remedy the problems of unemployment that had beset western Maryland.

Q: Western Maryland had a hunk of Appalachia, didn't it?

MATHIAS: Absolutely.

Q: It was very much the focus of attention during the Kennedys' time because Kennedy and Humphrey spent a great deal of time in Appalachia raising this as an issue. When you went in as a freshman congressman at a time when a Democratic president has just taken over from a Republican president, could you characterize first the Republican side and then Congress as a whole? I want to focus always on the time you were there—each hunk . MATHIAS: It was a time of some drama because Eisenhower was leaving the White House. Incidentally, he was wonderful—he extended a great welcome to the new members of Congress although he only had some months yet to serve. I remember he invited the freshmen Republicans down to breakfast at the White House and gave a direct, personal kind of talk. It was a wonderful introduction to national service. But of course the Kennedy bandwagon was rolling along and there was this sense of change in the air. There was a sense that the country was prepared for some change. At that point, the Republicans in the House of Representatives had allied themselves very firmly with the Dixiecrats of whom one of the leaders was Judge Howard W. Smith of Virginia, the Chairman of the House Rules Committee.

Q: You might explain who the Dixiecrats were - I mean their political caste.

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MATHIAS: The Dixiecrats were Democrats who were very conservative—ultra-conservative: they were conservative on social issues such as civil rights, they were conservative on economic issues, they were even more conservative than the conservative Republicans. The Dixiecrats...[INTERRUPTION]

Q: We are talking about 1959 when you came into Congress and how you all fitted into that...excuse me—1961 actually.

MATHIAS: Actually January of 1961. The coalition between the Republicans and the Dixiecrats had the potential of really controlling the House of Representatives. The Republican leader was Charlie Halleck of Indiana and the Dixiecrat leader was Judge Howard W. Smith of Virginia. They had a very close coalition that could have really prevented the Kennedy Administration from putting any of its major proposals before the House because the Rules Committee could have precluded movement of legislation to the House floor. So the real first order of business was how to deal with this situation: the only way the more progressive members of Congress saw to loosen up the flow of legislation—make it possible for the Kennedy program to at least come up for a vote (whether it was accepted or not) was to enlarge the Rules Committee and therefore to somewhat dilute Judge Smith's control. So that was the primary issue for the first thirty days of the new Congress: there were no votes other than for speakers as I recall. Everything rested on this issue of the expansion of the Rules Committee and it became a very partisan kind of vote as it naturally would. There were, however, in those days a significant number of progressive Republicans - "Bull Moosers" if you want to revive that old phrase.

Q: The progressive period of Teddy Roosevelt and all that.

MATHIAS: I naturally gravitated toward the "Bull Moosers".

Q: I would have thought...just to get a feel for American politics—this sounds like your predilection rather than your area. You were coming from what would be considered a

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normally conservative area—diary farming. Halleck was from... Smith—all these people were essentially small county boys as opposed to big city boys and all that.

MATHIAS: But my grandfather had been a “Bull Mooser”, my father was always one of the Republicans who was on the progressive side and that was our family tradition and so that's where I was when I arrived in Congress. I also had some experience during my brief legislative service at Annapolis in the fact that somehow you...sometimes you had to re-organize committees in order to move legislation, so that was not a new concept to me. I met with the progressive Republicans in the Congress and to make a long story short, we finally voted on the question of enlarging the Rules Committee which for a rather simple house keeping question had serious portent. It was a very close vote, in fact, the decision was the result of the votes of four freshmen Republicans. One was Bill Scranton of Pennsylvania (later governor of Pennsylvania), one was Brad Morris of Massachusetts, one was Abner Sibal of Connecticut, and myself. Without our four votes the motion to enlarge the Rules Committee would not have carried.

Of course, that put me in a somewhat difficult position. Immediately, I went all through my Congressional District and explained why I had done it—why I thought it was important. I must say with a great deal of gratitude that people were willing to listen and think about it—that got me started.

Q: Did this congressional battle which was on a sort of really conservative versus liberal maybe a little more progressive line, did this have any foreign affairs overtones to it or not, or was foreign policy relatively bipartisan at this point?

MATHIAS: I think that foreign affairs were bipartisan: they had been during the Eisenhower years. Eisenhower had leaned very heavily on the Democratic leadership of the Congress and they worked harmoniously together. At that point there were no foreign policy implications that I recall.

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Q: Having voted sort of against on a very partisan issue—voting against essentially the leadership of your party, did you find that when they handed out assignments—you were a freshman. How did that work out? Were you punished or was this a problem?

MATHIAS: Charlie Halleck was very generous on that. Charlie, although he had the reputation of being a hard shell conservative Republican, was very fair. The one thing that he didn't like was to be surprised: if you went to him in advance and said that you were not going to be with him on a certain vote, he might not like it, but he accepted it. As a result, there were not repercussions from the leadership. I always had a very constructive relationship with Charlie Halleck.

Q: What communities did you go to?

MATHIAS: I went to the Judiciary Committee which was my first choice and went to the District Committee which was necessary because my congressional district abutted on the District of Columbia.

Q: This was at a time particularly when there still was not home rule?

MATHIAS: That was before home rule and the District of Columbia was really a function of the Federal Government. To Charlie Halleck's credit, there were no adverse reactions to the vote.

Q: On the Judiciary Committee, there probably were some foreign policy or foreign affairs issues. I can think of immigration right now, was immigration much of an issue during that period you were there?

MATHIAS: Well, immigration, but there were also specific foreign policy questions that immediately came up. The Chairman of the Judiciary Committee was Emmanuel Celler of New York and he was very interested in refugees from East Europe particularly the Soviet Union. We had a function of the Judiciary Committee which was to authorize and

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really to oversee the program to bring Eastern European (Red Block)—Warsaw Pact Block refugees out of Eastern Europe either to the United States or to some other country or perhaps Israel. The Judiciary Committee pursued that very vigorously and, as I say, really had oversight of that program.

Q: When you say you have oversight...just to get a feel for how Congress worked...immigration is run essentially - the State Department gives the visas, Immigration Service which is under the Department of Justice admits or not admits people. How did you work as far as overseeing looking at this program?

MATHIAS: Well, there was a special program for these Eastern European refugees as I recall (and I'm subject to correction) - it was called "ICEM", the Intergovernmental Committee on European Migration. But Emanuel Celler was really the chief proponent. This involved going to refugee camps in Austria seeing how the flow from Eastern Europe was going on. All of this was the work of the Judiciary Committee and it was funded, rather generously funded, and refugees that didn't come to the United States were say sent to another country - perhaps South America or perhaps Israel and money was provided to help them get re-established.

Q: Was the driving force behind this...I think Emanuel Celler was Jewish...sometimes you have these programs which an earlier one was the Refugee Relief Program which was the main goal was really to bring Italians into the United States ...sort of an odd program, but that had ended by the time we're talking about. But was the driving force to get Soviet Block Jews to Israel or was it really a broader one in your sense of it?

MATHIAS: I think it was somewhat broader: obviously that was one of the parts of the program, but it also moved people to other locations. But as a result of that I was (not immediately—not in the first year or two, but ultimately) involved in that oversight which required going to some of these refugee centers and seeing how it actually worked.

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Q: What was your impression at this time of how the State Department was handling this and also the Immigration Service?

MATHIAS: Well, at this distance I don't remember too many of the details, but it seemed to be going along reasonably satisfactorily. There was strong support for it in the Congress and the State Department seemed to be carrying out the program.

*Q: What was your impression of the camps that you were seeing? Because this was really your first time as a responsible person for an element of foreign affairs in getting out and taking a look at things. **

MATHIAS: Well, this was an educational experience because I had had the benefit of some experience during the War seeing different kinds of situations. This was somewhat new and it involved dealing with the governments in the countries that were actually receiving the refugees. It involved dealing with the countries where the refugees ultimately would settle including Israel. Israel was, of course, desperate for economic aid: they needed, as I recall, something like \$25,000 for every immigrant they accepted in terms of getting them organized and giving them some sort of orientation training, and some sort of job training. It was a complicated and expensive operation and we were involved in all aspects of it.

Q: From your district, I take it, there was no interest one way or another in this, was there?

MATHIAS: Not a very strong although on the Montgomery County side there was more than average.

Q: Well, Montgomery County has an international group, I mean, working out of Washington, but also probably that is where the largest Jewish group is, isn't it? ...Sort of in Maryland and all that...connected to the American government. This ICEM procedure — was this pretty much bipartisan at the time?

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MATHIAS: Yes, the ranking Republican member of the Judiciary Committee was a very fine member from Ohio, named William McCulloch. He took an active interest and worked very cooperatively with Emanuel Celler. So there was a Republican activity in it.

Q: What about the some of the initiatives that the Kennedy administration took? I am thinking of the Alliance for Progress and the Peace Corps—this idea of almost ostentatiously seizing leadership and all that around the world? How did this sit?

MATHIAS: It got a somewhat mixed reaction in some respects. The Kennedys were very attractive and the public was intrigued and was interested in what they were doing and in what they were thinking and in what they were proposing, but sometimes it wore a little thin. I remember one embarrassing situation: Robert Kennedy when he was Attorney General was sent around the world to sort of beat the drum for the new American policy and, of course, in the Justice Department there was no funding for any kind of international travel on that scale. So the way his trip was funded was to use the travel funds that had been appropriated for the use of the State Department in the normal traveling of diplomats. As a result of the Kennedy around the world trip, all of the travel funds appropriated for the State Department had been expended. Ambassadors who were being transferred from one post to another would be languishing at their old posts because there were no funds to move them to their new posts.

Q: I remember that there was a travel freeze at the time.

MATHIAS: Travel freeze—people sitting around doing nothing because their job had terminated where they were and they couldn't get a ticket to go to where they should be. Those sorts of situations weren't do or die, but they were embarrassing and they wore thin a little bit.

Q: While I've got you here, I might as well ask you a few questions. Robert Kennedy was the Attorney General and you were on the Judiciary Committee—at the time that he was

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doing that and you were on the Judiciary Committee, what was your impression of how he operated? Were there any sort of problems—you're being both a Republican or just a member of Congress—of another agency of the government?

MATHIAS: We saw a great deal of Bob Kennedy on the Judiciary Committee: he would come down and testify on various matters. So I got to know him—I personally liked him. I thought he was a very useful, positive person, but he could be pretty tough. He could be difficult—difficult to deal with. Later, when we got into the civil rights phase, we saw even more of him.

Q: Again, what role did the civil rights efforts which were really initiated much under Kennedy and particularly later under Johnson, but Kennedy kicked it off? You were on a committee which until you arrived had a Dixiecrat caste to it ...how did that work?

MATHIAS: That had had a very inhibiting effect on Kennedy—the tone of the Congress. During the 1960 campaign, Jack Kennedy had on more than one occasion said that, “The first bill that will be introduced in the new Congress is the Civil Rights Bill,” and he said, “I am so determined that this will be the case that I have asked Senator Clark of Pennsylvania and Congressman Celler of New York to draft the bill now (that is “now” during the campaign) so that it will be ready to introduce when the new Congress meets...convenes in January of 1961.” January of 1961 came and went and there was no Kennedy Civil Rights Bill. Months and months went on and (again subject to going back and looking at the record) I don't think Kennedy's Civil Rights Bill ever got introduced into that 87th Congress at all. It wasn't until the 88th Congress convened in January, 1963 that we really got serious about civil rights and at that point there still was no Kennedy Bill. But John Lindsay of New York, who was still a Republican at that time, and Bill McCulloch of Ohio, who was the ranking Republican on the Judiciary Committee, and I joined as three co-sponsors to introduce a Civil Rights Bill. And because of the fact that we introduced this Republican bill that induced the Kennedy administration to finally introduce its bill two years late, but it came on. Then I remember Robert Kennedy came down and testified

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before the Committee about the Administration bill and I remember an exchange in which John Lindsay said, "Well, have you read our bill?" and Bob Kennedy said, "I can't read every bill."...very testy exchange. But that was the sequence of events as I recall it.

Q: Was the impetus behind this to really get something going on the part of you, Lindsay and McCulloch or was this one of these ploys to embarrass the other side?

MATHIAS: Not at all - it was a genuine effort. It built on the efforts of the Eisenhower Administration: Herbert Brownell, the Attorney General under the Eisenhower Administration had been genuinely interested in moving civil rights and we were building on his record and on the historic Republican thrust which began with the Emancipation Proclamation. It was in that tradition that we were moving in. It wasn't just a cheap trick to embarrass Kennedy.

Q: Were you finding that the main opposition to this was coming really from at that time the Republican South, I mean the representatives from there?

MATHIAS: Well, of course, the South was still the solid South, it was still Democratic. There was total opposition from the solid South and there was opposition from other parts of the country as well, but it was total and massive from the South. That included people like Judge Smith and other southerners in the House, but it included Senator Thurmond, Senator Ervin, Senator Russell—all of the deeply entrenched members of the Senate.

Q: Sam Rayburn was the Speaker... did he play...how did you find his hand at this time?

MATHIAS: Well, he played a rather impartial, correct role at least as far as publicly visible. He played a straight game. Ultimately...[INTERRUPTION]

Q: He played a neutral role in...

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MATHIAS: I don't recall that he was wildly obstructive. He wasn't part of the Dixiecrat operation—he was more a part of the Democratic leadership.

Q: During the early Kennedy period you had the meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchev which didn't go very well and the erection of the Berlin wall and all. What was sort of the feeling in Congress about the Soviet Union at that time?

MATHIAS: Well, the Cuban Missile Crisis...

Q: October 1962, I think.

MATHIAS: Yes...had a very serious impact on the Congress. In those days, I suppose the majority of the members of Congress were veterans of World War II, so they weren't unaware of these global events and the implications. But there was a sense of real danger in Washington during the Cuban Missile Crisis. I think maybe an exaggerated sense of danger, but none-the-less people felt that they were sitting on a target and I think that heightened the awareness of the possibilities of Soviet problems. The whole Cuban Missile Crisis I think had an effect of ratcheting up the tensions of the Cold War. I personally had an interesting experience during the Cuban Missile Crisis: by coincidence my annual Navy Reserve duty had been scheduled for that period and I went off to do that training and ended up in the nose cone of a P-2 patrol plane, Navy patrol plane...

Q: Neptune (???) or type?

MATHIAS: Anti-submarine. We actually (what we called) rigged the Soviet ships that were moving the missiles out of Cuba. We would circle over them and then go down to a low altitude and the Russian sailors would peel back the tarps and show us the missiles that were lying on their deck. It was very dramatic experience. So one way or another, I think the Congress became fully engaged in a much more personal way in the Cold War as

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a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis. It was not anymore a theoretical thing happening somewhere else, but it was something that might happen right here.

Q: There wasn't much of an isolationist strain at that point in the Republican Party?

MATHIAS: No, of course this again was part of the Eisenhower legacy. He had made a very deliberate, positive effort to make sure that the United States had an internationalist point of view. He encountered some hard-shell Republican reaction, but I think it had been pretty well overcome by then.

Q: Basically, the Taft Republicans who were more of the midwestern, old isolationist ilk had pretty well been dissipated by this time?

MATHIAS: That's right and there were things like the Bricker Amendment, but they were pretty much in the past by that time.

Q: What about opening up - it wouldn't have been in your direct line of responsibility, but you'd get involved—about the opening up towards Africa? This was just about the time that Kennedy came in—the majority of the countries in Africa were becoming independent nations and all and there was quite a lot of excitement about that...about sort of America's going to get involved because we were a revolutionary country and these countries are coming in and all. Were you...was sort of the excitement about the new independence of Africa catching down in the House?

MATHIAS: Well, there was some of it—yes. I remember that Soapy Williams was the Assistant Secretary with African responsibilities and Sargent Shriver was head of the Peace Corps which was sending people to Africa. On one occasion when Kenneth Kwanda was in Washington, Averell Harriman had a very small lunch in which he was kind enough to invite me and Kenneth Kwanda...

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Q: He was of northern Rhodesia, was it? Later (it has a different name now)...Zambia or something like that.

MATHIAS: Your right...this whole ferment of Africa was taking place and one way or another the people in Congress such as myself got involved.

Q: Did the Judiciary Committee have anything to do with problems with the United Nations in New York and all that? I thought there might be legal problems or something?

MATHIAS: I think most of them had been digested at an earlier stage.

Q: I don't want to get into Vietnam until next time, I think. Were you getting anything from your constituents concerning visas and consular matters - just normal visas and servicing your constituents as far as getting people into the United States?

MATHIAS: Given the nature of my district, we always had requests for assistance in that kind of matter. It was just a constant routine in the office.

Q: How responsive did you find the State Department during this particular time?

MATHIAS: I always have a pretty good relationship with the State Department. It may have been in part the fact that I was a local member and immediately involved: in fact, many of the people working in the State Department were my constituents.

Q: Particularly from Montgomery county?

MATHIAS: For whatever reason, I got a pretty good response from the Department.

Q: Because sometimes there's always been the complaint that the State Department doesn't understand the pressures on Congress for services and often immigration, passports, and this sort of thing. One other thing about this: what was your impression of

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the Judiciary and J. Edgar Hoover and the F.B.I. at time because we're talking about close to the twilight of his career?

MATHIAS: He was still viewed as a formidable figure—one that you didn't tamper with lightly.

Q: When he testified, did everybody treat him very carefully? I mean, did he ever testify?

MATHIAS: Well, I am reluctant to admit it, I don't recall his testimony. He may have testified before the Committee in my time. The Chairman's Special Subcommittee which was the Anti-trust Subcommittee really took care of all the critical activities of the Committee and it was several years before I got to that Subcommittee. It may be that testimony of that sort was in the Chairman's Subcommittee rather than before the full Committee.

Q: Well, why don't we stop at this point—it's just noon. I would like to put on the end here: there are a few more themes I'd like to talk about while you were in Congress. On any changes with the death of Kennedy in 1963 and the arrival of the Johnson Administration; any further feeling about aid/foreign affairs and then also the beginnings of our involvement up to a major involvement in Vietnam; and then we'll move to the Senate time. O.K.?

Q: Today is the 7th of November, 1995—Pearl Harbor Day. Senator, you're in Congress now and I wanted to ask you about the foreign relations side of your congressional work, did you get involved much to begin with?

MATHIAS: At a fairly early date I did. I think that my pattern was not typical, but the first couple of years in the Congress were necessarily learning the ropes, attending to the domestic chores that need to be done, but fairly early I began to be involved in one way or another in foreign affairs.

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Q: In what regard?

MATHIAS: Well, for instance—one of my first committees in the House of Representatives was the Judiciary and I may have mentioned this before the program for bringing refugees out of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe which was under the jurisdiction of the Judiciary Committee through its authority over Immigration and Naturalization.

Q: Was Frances Walters in business in those days?

MATHIAS: Yes, he certainly was.

Q: He was a Pennsylvanian too, wasn't he?

MATHIAS: He was from Pennsylvania. He was rather a conservative Democrat, but he worked very closely with Emanuel Celler, the Chairman of the Committee, and they ran a very tight operation.

Q: With immigration as far as your constituency went, were you given pretty much a free hand or?

MATHIAS: Yes, it wasn't a big local issue with us, but channeling the money to the programs bringing people out of Eastern Europe, overseeing the refugee centers that were established in Austria. I suppose that may have been my first foreign trip was on that business. The Chancellor of Austria in those days was Krieskie and he, by a curious coincidence, was some relation of Emanuel Celler. Perhaps...I don't remember the exact relationship, but there was something there. Of course, Krieskie was an interesting figure — not standard politician—a little bit different and he was one of the first foreign leaders that I met while going to Vienna with Emanuel Celler.

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Q: Where was Emanuel Celler coming from on the immigration side? I mean was his interest (he came from a New York district) mainly of finding a place for Jews or was it broader than that?

MATHIAS: I think he had a broader concept of immigration, but this particular program was, of course, focused on getting people out of Eastern Europe, out of the Soviet Union and to a large degree that meant Soviet Jewry.

Q: Well now, the Kennedy Administration came along in 1961—here you were a liberal Republican—what did that do to you?

MATHIAS: Of course, I was elected in November of 1960 at the same time as Kennedy. Somewhat paradoxically because I was elected as a Republican in a Democratic presidential year.

Q: Yes and Maryland being essentially more Democratic than that.

MATHIAS: Yes, that is exactly right. So it didn't make life any easier, but on the other hand, as it turned out there were opportunities to move forward even in that environment.

Q: Did you get involved in the early stages of some of the Kennedy initiatives? I'm thinking of the Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress? Did these impact on where you were dealing or?

MATHIAS: Yes, to some extent. The Peace Corps, of course, was headed up by Sargent Shriver...

Q: From Maryland.

MATHIAS: Who was from Maryland, was in effect, a neighbor and lent a local interest to a what was otherwise a worldwide program. So, I was necessarily interested in that. Alliance

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for Progress was a little more distant, dealing with Latin America and that wasn't quite as topical, but none-the-less these were all involved with the issues of that period.

Q: When did you run for the Senate?

MATHIAS: In 1968.

Q: We didn't cover the slow involvement of the United States in Vietnam. How did this hit you as you watched this develop in the House? What was your initial impression about Vietnam and that of you colleagues about what we were doing there?

MATHIAS: We, of course, it wasn't a very big story. I don't recall that in the Election of 1960 that it was a campaign issue at all—it was never mentioned. President Eisenhower had made some very tentative steps in the direction of Vietnam, but they were not in the public consciousness at all. It wasn't until well into the Kennedy Administration that it began to receive any public notice.

Q: There were several things in the Kennedy Administration: one was early on the concern about what the Soviets were up to—the Berlin Wall and all. Again what was the attitude of Congress towards these moves by the Soviets?

MATHIAS: Well, I think the Congress was fairly unified in its attitude toward the Soviet Union and its tactics, including the construction of the Wall...

Q: Missiles in Cuba?

MATHIAS: Missiles in Cuba certainly, the Berlin Blockade...

I think there was essential unity in the Congress in opposing the aggressive and disruptive activities of the Soviet Union.

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Q: From your District were you getting any (up to and including the early Johnson period) were you getting signs of discontent regarding the increasing involvement in Vietnam?

MATHIAS: Not really, no. It was such a low profile item that I think very few people even knew it existed, let alone were exercised about it.

Q: By 1968, we had already made a rather major commitment in Vietnam. The election of 1968 was the one that put you into the Senate, is that right?

MATHIAS: That's right.

Q: Whom were you running against?

MATHIAS: Ran against the incumbent Senator - his name was Daniel Brewster.

Q: What sort of a battle was that? How would you characterize the senatorial campaign?

MATHIAS: Well, it was a fairly straight forward campaign. Senator Brewster had some personal problems that complicated his position and we just plugged along. Actually there was a third candidate in the race named George P. Mahoney, who took rather conservative positions.

Q: He ran several times, didn't he?

MATHIAS: He ran a number of times. But as a result, I was able to get a plurality (not a majority) of the votes and got elected in a three way race.

Q: In 1968, was Vietnam or foreign affairs at all an issue within Maryland?

MATHIAS: Middle East was an issue.

Q: Middle East?

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MATHIAS: That was the primary foreign policy question.

Q: This was after the 1967 War...a year after?

MATHIAS: That's right.

Q: Well, what was the issue of the Middle East?

MATHIAS: Basically, support for Israel.

Q: Why would Maryland be particularly supportive or not supportive? I mean, you think of New York, Florida, and California as having large Jewish communities but what was it in Maryland that made it...

MATHIAS: Maryland has a very important Jewish community.

Q: Oh, it does.

MATHIAS: Very important. So, it was an important issue in the campaign.

Q: As an issue, where did you find yourself coming out?

MATHIAS: Well, I was certainly supportive of Israel which is the way I felt very strongly and still feel very strongly. I think the whole situation has altered a lot in this thirty-five year period. There were opportunities to state that position and I think it was an important element in the campaign.

Q: How did you find being a Senator under...well, let's see...in 1968, Johnson had left and it was Nixon now?

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MATHIAS: That's right. I remember I went to the White House to make a farewell call to President and Mrs. Johnson and _____. Vietnam was very much part of the scene at that time—his son in law...

Q: Charles Robb?

MATHIAS: No, the other one was actually on an air patrol (air operation) at the very moment that we were sitting in the Oval Office. I remember that the President got periodic reports about where he was. I got the distinct impression that it was not a good situation for the President of the United States to hear minute by minute where his relatives are in a combat picture. You either ought to keep them out of combat or keep their activities quiet, but that is another story. But on that occasion he told me why he decided not to run for president. He said that he needed a tax bill and the Republicans wouldn't give him a tax bill to support the dollar if he were a candidate. He wanted to get the peace process started and Ho Chi Minh wouldn't negotiate with him on peace if he were a candidate for re-election. He realized that he couldn't campaign in cities because of the anti-war activities, so that it would be very difficult to run a campaign. Finally, he pointed to the portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt which was hanging on the wall and he said, "I don't want to go out of this house the way he did—in a box."

Q: I think he was very much aware of the actuarial tables. If I recall, he keep mentioning the fact that his family died at the age of sixty-four which is the age that he died at too.

MATHIAS: Pat Nugent was his other son-in-law.

Q: The one that was flying, yes. Both of them were involved in Vietnam at one time or another. What was your impression of Nixon when he came in? He had been a Senator, been Vice- President, and he had been out in the wilderness for some time. He was coming out—at least initially coming out of what appeared to be—the right wing of the

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Republican Party. Here you were on what could be called the left wing of the party, what was your impression of Nixon at that time?

MATHIAS: Did I tell you at our last session about my working with him?

Q: No, I don't think so, but we can always take it out if you already have. But, please tell me.

MATHIAS: A week after his inauguration, I was invited to come down to the White House for breakfast. In the week that he had been President, one of the first things that Nixon had done was to modify the embargo on Chinese goods. He didn't lift the embargo entirely, but he softened it. At the end of this breakfast, I went to the President and I said, "I noticed what you did on the Chinese embargo and I just wanted to let you know that I'm very supportive of that. I think it is very important to reach out to try to establish some communication with the Chinese." And he said, "Well, just wait—that is only the beginning: what we're going to do with China is a great deal more than that. Just wait and see." So, really he arrived with his Chinese policy and one that he executed very directly and consistently. He worked along somewhat patiently until the opportunities arose and then he developed the policy and carried it out. But it's always interesting to me that he must have arrived at the White House with that Chinese plan in his suitcase.

Q: When you went into the Senate, what were your committees?

MATHIAS: I again went on the Judiciary Committee as I had been in the House and was on... I think my other first committees were Government Operations and Judiciary. Then shortly thereafter I transferred to Appropriations.

Q: Did any of these get you more involved in foreign affairs or?

MATHIAS: Appropriations—very much so because I was on the subcommittees that dealt with the funding of the foreign operations.

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Q: What was your impression of how the Department of State presented its budgets? I have often heard criticism from within the service and outside that they...

MATHIAS: I think that they had big fiscal problems—no question about it and they didn't always present them in the most effective way.

Q: Were there any people on your Appropriations Committee who had almost a visceral dislike (from either party) of the State Department, which sometimes it's, "Them guys who deal with foreigners" which can be a problem sometimes?

MATHIAS: No, I can't honestly say that I can remember anyone who had that...with whom I was immediately dealing. There were a lot of people who had particular causes, but nothing like the occasional situation you have where anything the State Department does is wrong.

Q: How about the staff at that time? It seems that in the last decade or so you have a much more partisan staff than you used to (and this is just from the outside.) How did you find the staff?

MATHIAS: They were pretty much professionals in those early days. The Senate staff had not been politicized as to the extent that it has been now. Many of the committees didn't have majority/minority divisions on the staff: the staff served the whole committee regardless of party and it worked very well.

Q: The Nixon Administration was in (came in) then in 1969—the war was really heating up in Vietnam. Tet had already come and gone, but there were tremendous mobs and all this. What sort of pressures were you feeling on Vietnam with your constituency?

MATHIAS: By that time, of course, Vietnam was a very big issue and there were very strong pressures for peace. A lot of activity in Maryland on the peace side and it was incumbent on us to be as fully informed as we possibly could. I took every opportunity to

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learn as much about the war as I possibly could. By that time, people were beginning to worry about the number of missing in action. On one occasion when I was in France, I sought out a French general who had been in command in the French Indochina part of the War and I talked to him about this. I think he told me that the French had something like 50,000 missing in action, which is, of course, an enormous number of unaccounted for compared with any figures we have encountered. He described the combat conditions and said that in his opinion it was almost impossible to avoid those kinds of casualties and given the terrain, given the climate, given the general situation he felt that having a large number of missing in action was just a normal part of the cost of the war. On another occasion (it might have been on the same trip) I was in Paris and Fritz Nolting who had been our Ambassador in Saigon by that time was out of government and was working for J.P. Morgan and was in charge of the Paris office. I went to see him and I remember the occasion very well. Again, trying to educate myself on some of the background of the war, I was fascinated by one thing he said which was that during his time as ambassador he would be called back to Washington for meeting to discuss developments and at these meetings when the question of expanding the number of troops arose or enlarging the field of operation, almost the only person who could be expected to consistently oppose was Lyndon Johnson, who was then Vice-President. This is so different from the image of Johnson as President in expanding the war.

Q: In the Senate, I mean here is an issue that was grabbing everybody and you say that you talked there, were you able to either through— although you were not on the Foreign Relations Committee at that time, were you?

MATHIAS: That is correct.

Q: How does a Senator go about informing himself about an issue like this? Could you reach down and get people to talk to you here in Washington?

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MATHIAS: You do it every way you can. You talk to all sorts of people: talk to service men coming home, you talk to foreign service officers, you talk to Department people. You have to use every means that you can get.

Q: I suppose that the largest educational institution is the University of Maryland, isn't it? Some of the universities really were very strong anti-war voices, how did you...

MATHIAS: Well, that was a constant problem. I remember early one morning getting a phone call from Lincoln Gordon who was the president of Johns Hopkins...

Q: He had been an ambassador under Kennedy.

MATHIAS: Right. And he said that he wanted me to come over to Hopkins right away and I wanted to know why. He said that they were facing a student riot and I said, "What do you want me for?" and he said, "Well, maybe you would have some influence. It would be helpful if you could be here." So to make a long story short, I finally agreed to come and spoke briefly to the students without much effect, as I recall, and they went out and burned some shanty down in the course of the demonstration. I remembered it particularly because it is an example of how you can get caught by the press: I was exhorting these students to exercise their political rights to press their agenda through the political process, and they would have more effect than they had ultimately in rioting on the campus. The evening news showed a little clip in which I was saying to the students, "This is your hour, this is your moment..." and while I went on to say, "... to exercise your political leadership", but they left that out and it just looked as though I was cheering them on.

Q: That was a very difficult period. My wife was getting her degree at the University of Maryland at this time while I was off in Saigon. When I used to come back, we didn't have a real meeting of minds for awhile. It was hard. What sort of pressure were you getting from the President as far as saying, "You've got to support me and I know what I am trying to do" and all that?

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MATHIAS: Well, in the early Nixon days, we got a fair amount of that pressure and it included being invited to the White House to meet with the President in small groups to discuss particular issues or particular votes that were impending. As time went on, I developed a fairly marked record of moving toward a more independent position—moving towards ending the war and getting out. So that affected my relationship with the White House and I saw less of the White House after that than before.

Q: I think he really did keep a list (didn't he?) during that time at the White House?

MATHIAS: I think so, yes.

Q: You're either with us or against us?

MATHIAS: An enemies list.

Q: What was your impression of, say, the Democratic side of the equation in the Senate? Was there a growing disillusionment or was the pressure getting more and more intense on both parties or?

MATHIAS: Yes, of course, it had gotten very tense as far as Senator Fulbright was concerned during the Johnson period when Fulbright held his hearings which were so critical of Johnson—either explicitly or implicitly. That sort of drew a line in the sand right there and in a strange way that atmosphere prevails after Nixon took over. There was a sharp division between the people who wanted to continue the war and people who wanted to bring an end to it.

Q: One has the impression that between Fulbright and Johnson there was a certain amount of animus—more than just policy (but I don't know.) Was that sort of the impression that one got that...?

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MATHIAS: Yes, it got to be fairly personal. With Johnson policy questions very often did: in Fulbright's case it was personal, but there were also people like Mike Mansfield who were much more dispassionate and reserved, but still very firm in his view. There were a few Democrats who supported the Nixon policy—John Stennis for example.

Q: From Mississippi or Alabama?

MATHIAS: Mississippi.

Q: Mississippi, yes.

MATHIAS: So that neither party was totally committed toward it: there were shades of opinions in both parties.

Q: Did you find yourself at any particular time on this whole Vietnam thing coming to almost a dividing thing of saying maybe begrudging support or not being sure of the issues so the President gets your support up to the point where you say, "We've really got to get out of there." I mean was there a dividing time and did that develop or how?

MATHIAS: Yes, it did. And, of course, that brought me to the point of acting and introducing a resolution to repeal the Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

Q: Which Fulbright had sponsored!

MATHIAS: That's right.

Q: What happened with the effort to repeal?

MATHIAS: Well, for a long time it was not allowed to come up for a vote...couldn't bring it up to a vote. Then interestingly enough a worse situation evolved to a point that Bob Dole introduced the same resolution and called it up for a vote immediately and it was passed.

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But it was his resolution that passed rather than mine. But it was a totally different context by the time that happened.

Q: What had brought you to this point in your own sort of personal evaluation of the situation?

MATHIAS: Oh, of course, a continuing concern with what was happening on the ground in Vietnam—that we weren't winning (if “winning” is the right word)—we were not being successful in the way we sought to be successful. The enormous price of it—not in dollar terms alone, but in the political price that we were paying. The general disruption that was being created. It just seemed to me that we had reached a point we had to put an end to it.

Q: Were others of your colleagues in the Senate—would you sort of get together and talk this over?

MATHIAS: Definitely. We had a group of very harmonious members that met on Wednesdays which was a fairly small group and we had lunch every Wednesday—that was one forum where we could discuss the war among other issues. That was all Republicans, but there were some other ad hoc groups that would be bipartisan. So, there was a lot of quiet, thoughtful discussion going on.

Q: What was your impression of the information you were getting from the State Department on how things were going?

MATHIAS: Well, we're talking about a long time ago. I don't recall that people ever accused the State Department of deliberately misrepresenting the facts, but I think that people had the feeling that perhaps there was more to know than they were being told.

Q: Did you ever have a chance to get over to Vietnam?

MATHIAS: Never. Never made that trip.

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Q: These trips really don't show much usually. You're bundled off and taken and given almost packaged tours and...

MATHIAS: Briefings.

Q: Briefings...military briefings are terrible I think because they tend to give the party line straight on and it's hard to get into a real discussion. We might as well follow the Vietnam thing through: how did this...at the end of the Vietnam thing, there was a time when Congress voted a cut off to aid (military aid) to South Vietnam which in a way was a final nail in the coffin of the South Vietnamese. I suspect...I'm quite sure that they would have collapsed anyway. It certainly moved things. What was your feeling on this?

MATHIAS: Well, of course, the Nixon Administration had utilized every possible way to keep things going. I remember at one occasion Mel Laird, who was then Secretary of Defense at the time, exhumed a Food and Forage Act which was a relic from the 19th century which provided that when a cavalry commander got out beyond his normal source of supply, he could go to farmers and make a commitment that they would be paid for the hay that he would impound for his horses. Mel used the authority of the Food and Forage Act to get credit to keep going in Vietnam. There were extreme interpretations of legislation that was on the book. So, I think the mood developed in Congress that you just had to cut everything off because there were no halfway measures that would be effective.

Q: Toward the very end, Nixon had left because of Watergate and Ford was in. Did you have the feeling that when Nixon left that this pretty much...that Ford was more the man to maybe preside over the end of things or..?

MATHIAS: I think that was the feeling that we had reached the end of that rope.

Q: What happened towards the end, I mean when Vietnam fell (this would be in 1974, I guess) in the spring of 1975? What were sort of the concerns in the Senate at that point?

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MATHIAS: Well, the prisoners of war was a major issue...missing in action, repatriation of people as quickly as possible. There was not, as I recall, a great concentration of attention on what was going to happen in Vietnam itself. The curtain had been pulled on that.

Q: When did you come on the Foreign Relations Committee?

MATHIAS: In 1980 - I think it was.

Q: So up to 1980...so the other big foreign policy issue was Israel and all: there was the 1973 War during this time. This was before Carter came in. You say that you were a staunch supporter of Israel: did you see a problem (I think it is one within the Foreign Service we have always had difficulty dealing on the domestic/political side) because if you're dealing with American foreign relations you're up against the fact that you have a vast Arab area, a very small Jewish area and that the Arab area is also sitting on major resources. So if you're looking at American interests, it's hard to say our interests are completely with Israel and opposed to the Arab one; but on the domestic side, the sympathy and all goes with Israel. Was this a problem for you and your fellow Senators in dealing with this?

MATHIAS: Yes, it is a problem and it's one that can't be avoided because you can have great sympathy with what the Israelis are trying to do—create a nation out of a very difficult landscape and a difficult climate. But you will also have to consider the equities that the Arab people...and this was a constant difficulty. Sometimes, trying to persuade the Israelis that their real interest was in being more flexible than they were disposed to be at any given moment and sometimes it took very hard bargaining with them. I thought we should support them as best we could, but I thought we also needed to remind them from time to time that there were problems in their situation that went further than they were sometimes willing to admit. In that connection, I remember once when Rabin was Prime Minister, that was the first when he was - in the 1970's, and I was having a conversation with him in Israel. I said to him, "I think one of Israel's great dangers is maybe viewed as intransigent

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by American public opinion.” He looked at me and he said, “As the Prime Minister of Israel, the only public opinion that I am concerned about is Israeli public opinion.”

Q: But you know, he obviously knew...

MATHIAS: He knew what I was talking about.

Q: He could say that, but...

MATHIAS: We both understood each other. But as that conversation illustrates, we had an opportunity to have a pretty free exchange—voicing our concerns and our views.

Q: What about public opinion in Maryland? As Senator, what pressures were brought to bear, I mean, did you feel pressures of the American-Israeli Political Action Committee or whatever stood for the Israeli lobby? Did you feel a heavy hand on you?

MATHIAS: Every time that there was a vote that impinged on the situation, you would hear from them, of course. I remember the sale of airplanes to Saudi Arabia for example...

Q: They were AWACS, I think - weren't they? Or is that the one...

MATHIAS: They were some others. There would always be heavy lobbying

Q: How would you respond to lobbying?

MATHIAS: Simply sit down with the people and try to talk out the issue in respect to Israel. With the AWACS, it's a good example of the need for the AWACS from the Saudi's point of view was in large measure because of the trouble with Iran which was a matter of just a few minutes just across the Persian Gulf to the oil fields of eastern Saudi Arabia. Without some early warning system, such as the AWACS could provide them, they were really sitting ducks for lightning raids out of Iran. I would get maps of the region and try to explain it to audiences or the groups that came to visit me and we would talk these things out.

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Even if you couldn't persuade them to adopt your point of view, at least understand that you're making decisions on a rational basis and sometimes that was the best you could do.

Q: When the Carter Administration came in, what was your impression of Carter's leadership particularly in the field of foreign affairs?

MATHIAS: Well, I don't think it inspired any particular confidence in the field of foreign affairs and like many presidents, as I recall, he had a sort of slow start to foreign policy operations. Cyrus Vance was very experienced and really a splendid person to be Secretary of State both by temperament and by experience he was a good candidate for Secretary of State. I think that side of it worked out very well.

Q: Let's continue with the Israeli side and finish that up. What about Camp David? What was the Senate feeling and your feeling about as the Camp David process began to develop?

MATHIAS: Well, of course that was one of the hopeful things. That had been preceded by Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and all the emotion that that evoked. Camp David was really trying to reduce that emotional development to a practical result. So, I think it was generally supportive and I think President Carter was generally admired for the role that he played.

Q: Something that was far more partisan was the Panama Canal Treaty which was another one of Carter's initiatives. [SIDE 2] What was your feeling about the Panama Canal Treaty returning the Panama Canal to Panamanian control?

MATHIAS: I was generally supportive of that. The cost of maintaining it in colonial status was beyond any reasonable hope of getting a return on it. The time had come to work out some other method. After all, what we wanted was the use of the canal: we didn't have to have the title deed to the canal. That generally was the policy I followed.

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Q: Were you getting pressure trying to turn it into a partisan issue?

MATHIAS: Some, yes—but not excessive. As I recall, some of the veterans' groups, some of the right wing groups were heard from, but it wasn't undo pressure, no.

Q: What about issues like Carter at first looking towards the Soviet Union and thinking that maybe we could reach better relations through more business relations and all? This was before they went into Afghanistan—how did you feel about Carter's attempt to open up a real dialogue with the Soviets on this?

MATHIAS: I thought that was worth doing. After all, the Nixon Administration had gone a long way towards reaching out to some rapport with the Soviet Union. The Carter approach was not that all dissimilar: it might have had a slightly different accent, but it was not an innovative effort.

Q: What was the impact of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan of December of 1979?

MATHIAS: Of course that changed the scene markedly and after that there was much less interest in extending our reach.

Q: President Carter took some rather drastic steps: canceling our Olympics, canceling wheat deals. Generally was this basically supported?

MATHIAS: To tell you the truth, I disagreed with him on both of those issues. I thought those were excessive. We could show our displeasure in other ways that were not as disruptive of an ongoing effort to build some sort of international structure.

Q: At the same time—just a little before the Soviets went into Afghanistan, we had the seizure of our Embassy in Tehran by radical Islamic movements. How did you feel about steps the Administration was taking to deal with that?

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MATHIAS: Well, of course you have to go back really to the steps that the President took or didn't take with respect to the Shah. I'm not sure even to this day that our policy with regard to Iran was correct. We might have been able with a little more leadership to deflect some of the problems that erupted there. It's difficult to say, but I'm not sure that the Carter Administration's handling of Iran problems from the beginning of the difficulties were the optimum steps. I think it will be interesting as scholars get access to the records of those periods to reconstruct what was done and compare it with what might have been done.

Q: I'm not sure how much we could have changed (you might say) the forces of history, but there we certainly did not cover ourselves with glory. What about Ronald Reagan who became President in 1981? Again, here you are a moderate Republican and Ronald Reagan is coming out of very much the right hand side of the party. How did you feel about this?

MATHIAS: I had supported George Bush very enthusiastically in his candidacy and disappointed when he didn't prevail. I had some apprehension when Reagan took over: I wasn't sure what sort of administration he would really have. But it became evident fairly soon that it was not going to be as radical a change as I had feared.

Q: Well, there is often this arrival of the new boys into the game and pretty soon I understand what the rules are and basically what the constraints and what the forces are. You can't deviate too far particularly in the field of foreign affairs. You moved to the Foreign Relations Committee at that time—what was your impression of it? Can you describe it in 1981? I mean what type of committee would you call it?

MATHIAS: Well, it was a committee that was fairly... I don't know if I want to say harmonious because they certainly had some bitter disputes, but I would say it was a fairly unified committee with a fairly broad view of global problems. It took a fairly broad view of what American commitments were and had a good deal of deference for the President as

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the architect of foreign policy, but wasn't hesitant about criticizing when they felt that was necessary. It was a constructive committee.

Q: Were there any issues that might have divided it during this period? Because we're really talking about the Reagan and then the Bush period, are we?

MATHIAS: Yes

Q: Were there any issues that showed real fissures in the Committee?

MATHIAS: Well, it seems to me that some of the relationships with the Soviet Union particularly in the military confrontations with the Soviet Union, nuclear policy, that kind of thing was as close to divisive issues as we had.

Q: What was your perception during the early eighties of the Soviet Union and vis-a-vis the United States?

MATHIAS: Well, I had made my first trip to the Soviet Union back in 1975 (perhaps - maybe 1976) and so I had begun to have some first hand experience of what the Soviet Union was like. I'm not suggesting that a Congressional junket is the answer to knowing a country, but you begin to get some sense of what it is about.

Q: It gives you a feel.

MATHIAS: I had made one or two more trips to the Soviet Union by that time and I was not without hope that we would someday be able to work out a coexistence. Like most Americans, I think I probably gave the Soviet Union more credit than it deserved for its strength and ability to project policies. In any event, we viewed it as a formidable competitor.

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Q: As time progressed, you saw the arrival of Gorbachev on the scene and beginnings of change there. Was there any talk about maybe we're really going to have a new Russia or was it...?

MATHIAS: No, it took us by surprise when it came. I don't recall any predictions at that time that things were going to break up as quickly as they did.

Q: Now you're on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—how did you find the State Department as far as liaison, talking to it...?

MATHIAS: Very helpful, but that had been true before I went on the Foreign Relations Committee. Generally, I thought the State Department was constructive, helpful in its relations with members of Congress—tried to get the answers, tried to get the information that was requested, knocked themselves out to be helpful if you were on trips. I was very impressed really with the general relationship.

Q: You didn't have the feeling that these were a bunch of bureaucrats trying to put something over on the Senate or something like that?

MATHIAS: No, no and if I had questions I'd ask them and if I disagreed I'd tell them. Afterwards, recheck something. We had no problems of that sort.

Q: What about the period with Israel when Israel went into Lebanon? Here you've been a strong supporter of Israel and there are some rather nasty things with the refugee camps and all, Israelis bombarding sort of indiscriminately Beirut...

MATHIAS: We had some direct talks with the Israelis about that. I remember on one occasion Menachem Begin came to the Foreign Relations Committee, and we raised with him the questions of using airplanes supplied by the United States to bomb these refugee camps. Begin reacted with a good deal of heat and didn't feel that as Prime Minister of Israel that he should have been subjected to that criticism face to face. They were very

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lively exchanges: I remember one Senator in the heat of the moment said, "Let me tell you, Jack." And Begin saying, "My name is not Jack - it is Menachem." So we had those kinds of frank discussions.

Q: You left the Senate in 1987, did you see a change during the eighties in the relationship of the United States with Israel?

MATHIAS: I don't know that there was a change in the basic relationship, but I think that there was perhaps a more pragmatic climate. As when we raised some remonstrance about the bombing of the refugees, other activities that we were concerned with, but these were the same kinds of things that I had discussed with Rabin ten years earlier in warning him that he could lose...that he could be viewed as intransigent by American public opinion. That didn't disrupt the basic...

Q: How about the Senate staff during the eighties? Did you see a change in how the staff operated?

MATHIAS: Well, in the Foreign Relations Committee in particular _____

Q: What was the rationale for doing that?

MATHIAS: That the majority really absorbed the whole staff when it was a unified professional staff and that left the minority without adequate staff support. So that was the basis on which it was divided into a majority-minority staff.

Q: How did you feel after this came about? Did you feel that you were better served or...what?

MATHIAS: I think it actually happened before I got on the Committee, but it was a good staff I've heard either way.

Q: Did you find that members of the staff having their own agenda?

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MATHIAS: Well, obviously there were people who had some interests that they nurtured, but not to the point that I found it an obstruction to anything else we needed to do.

Q: What about Latin America—particularly Central America? Nicaragua and El Salvador were sort of on the plate of the Reagan Administration for almost the entire time you were on the Foreign Relations Committee: what was your feeling, reaction to this whole business?

MATHIAS: Well, we got into the Iran-Contra. I think that the right wing in this country politically was pressing these issues very hard...too hard. I wasn't for the Nicaragua...I wasn't particularly an advocate of the Sandinistas, but it seemed to me the Contras were_____. We weren't going to do ourselves a lot of good or do them a lot of good by pressing their case too hard.

Q: Did you find the Reagan Administration inviting you to the White House because you weren't wholehearted on this anti-Sandinista/ pro-Contra business? Did you feel sort of cut out from any part of the Reagan Administration during this period?

MATHIAS: In some respects, yes. Because I made no bones about where I was on this and I think that was understood: therefore, I wasn't necessarily taken into camp on all the...

Q: What about the whole Iran-Contra business—how did that hit you? I mean that was selling arms to our (in a way) mortal enemies the Iranians in order to get some hostages out of Beirut and using the money to go to the Contras.

MATHIAS: It just didn't make any sense at all. It had to be viewed as an aberration and I still think it was. It was contradictory of the President's policies—of the President's statements. It flew right in the face of what he was tried to do and the payoff was very meager—I think two hostages. It just didn't make any sense.

Q: Did you have a feeling that this was the President...?

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MATHIAS: It should have been cut off by the President.

Q: Did you have a feeling that the President was either—that this was the President's policy or that he was being very ill served by his National Security apparatus.

MATHIAS: I thought the latter...I thought that....I couldn't believe that it was his considered, deliberate policy and that I suspected what was happening that bits and pieces of his policy were being woven into this pattern by some of the apparatus. I still think that's largely what happened.

Q: It does half-smack of underlings taking control, thinking they knew what their great leader wanted or something?

MATHIAS: That's right and the President may or may not have been informed in a timely way of what was happening. That's still not clear.

Q: You left in 1988?

MATHIAS: 1987.

Q: What was your feeling at that time about whether America and the world? Did you see us?

MATHIAS: Well, I, of course, was not prepared for the complete collapse of the Soviet Union which took place almost immediately thereafter. I think at that moment we had a somewhat optimistic view that things were slowly improving, but we didn't realize there would be this total change almost overnight. As I look back on it, it was a surprise that the Berlin Wall came down.

Q: What was your impression of the foreign relations process within the Senate vis-a-vis the White House and all? Did you feel that it was a healthy one?

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MATHIAS: I'm not sure that there was the direct flow of communication between President Reagan and members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that there had been between the Committee or the Senate generally and earlier presidents. It seems to me that the President was protected by staff to a greater degree than earlier presidents had been. One of the things that was lacking in that period was the free communication between the President and the Senate which has been an element of foreign policy at many of the more important moments in our history.

Q: Well, Senator, I know we're pressed for time so why don't we stop at this point, I think.

MATHIAS: All right.

End of interview